

Traditional Economic Activities

67

of metal and 10 pesos if made of wood. These are lined with waxed paper which the local storekeeper cuts from cracker-box wrappers and sells for 5 cents each. 435
415
177

Electricity, first used in the cooperative store and later in the liquor shops, is now being installed in houses. 83 families had electricity installed in their homes by 1967. Street lights have been in operation since 1966, although the first attempt to install them was blocked by residents on the streets to be lighted who did not want to pay the tax of 1 peso per month per household to meet the cost to the community of 75 pesos a month. Most people have a flashlight, and lighting in the house is provided by pitch pine or by small kerosene lamps. Candles are used only in ceremonies. 365 •
[651]
354
[416]

The inventory of items sold in the cooperative store in town includes the most frequently purchased items of consumption. Hardware includes buckets, hoes, kerosene lamps, batteries, Gillette blades, shotgun bullets, canned goods such as sardines, chiles, and powdered milk. Packaged foods include rice, sugar, salt, oatmeal, cornstarch, flour, coffee, biscuits, cookies, gum, and candy. Beer is sold along with soft drinks and cigarettes. Household supplies include candles, soap, D.D.T. powder, thread, matches, and kerosene. Medicines dispensed most frequently include sulphur pills, aralin, Desenfriol, Alka-Seltzer, and Sonrisal. Yard goods for shawls, children's wraps, and men's clothing are sold along with manufactured shirts, blouses for girls, and rubber capes. Eggs as well as money are taken in payment and then sold. Except for one can of Chocomilk, which sat on the shelves for a year, all of the items are in constant demand, and provide an index to the level of living and dependency on external markets. 444
[436]

The preferences in changing consumption are limited by communal standards of what is appropriate. I once asked a man who was acquiring more than the usual income by brokerage activities what he would buy with more money. He replied, "I would get more land and cattle." I interrupted to ask what he would do to improve his standard of living. "I wouldn't get better clothing—what would I need that for? I would get a house built with good materials like this [the government-built clinic] with a cement floor. But I couldn't get it now because of envy. When my children grow up, they [the neighbors] will see them working and maybe 434
178
177
[156]

159 civil officials, not of me"). He identifies himself with the Indians in the
 275 fight against the competitive trucking cooperative ("Those who are with
 563 him [Don Ramon] are traitors to the pueblo. They are being exploited by
 177 him"). While he does not accuse Ramon's wife directly of witchcraft he
 178 implies this in saying that people sign their candidate's nomination peti-
 [754] tion for president because they are afraid Juana will use witchcraft. This is
 [626] a characteristic mode of attacking one's enemies in the town. He claims
 credit for all of the innovations in the town which have won public ap-
 proval—the highway, the water supply, electricity, and so forth.

622 The profit motive is inadequate to explain why Ladinos want to play
 875 the role of cacique in these corporate Indian communities. One must seek
 563 for an explanation instead in the social status they gain. While their jobs
 177 are limited and usually frustrating and they can never be completely inte-
 178 grated into the community, political activities offer them a larger arena in
 which they can derive personal satisfaction. The contrast between the
 schoolmaster's position in Tzo'ontahal before he became a political leader
 and his position after finding local supporters illustrates this. In the early
 days of his residence in town, when he built a chicken coop which ex-
 tended a few feet beyond the grounds allotted to the schoolhouse, some In-
 dians threatened to kill him. In 1957, I saw him trying to summon a po-
 liceman from the town hall, which was adjacent to the schoolhouse, to
 remove a boulder from the path so that a visiting friend could pass in his
 automobile. No one heeded his urgent shouts or the whistle he used to call
 children to school, although they were well aware of what he wanted. But
 by 1965 there was not a single important transaction which did not require
 consultation with the schoolteacher. Campesinos from as far as Villa Las
 Rosas came to request his advice and his help in approaching government
 agents. In projecting his political role, he gained support for projects
 which were of interest to him. When he had succeeded in getting the gov-
 [653] ernment to install water pipes and electricity, he talked the civil authori-
 [312] ties into building a kiosk, or bandstand, in the plaza. This was a fulfill-
 [365] ment of his ambition to make the town over in the image of a colonial
 [345] Spanish pueblo. His final statement in the speech quoted above, "Today
 we see a kiosk; tomorrow we will have a telephone, telegraph, and a fac-
 tory!" reveals the symbolic significance it had for him.